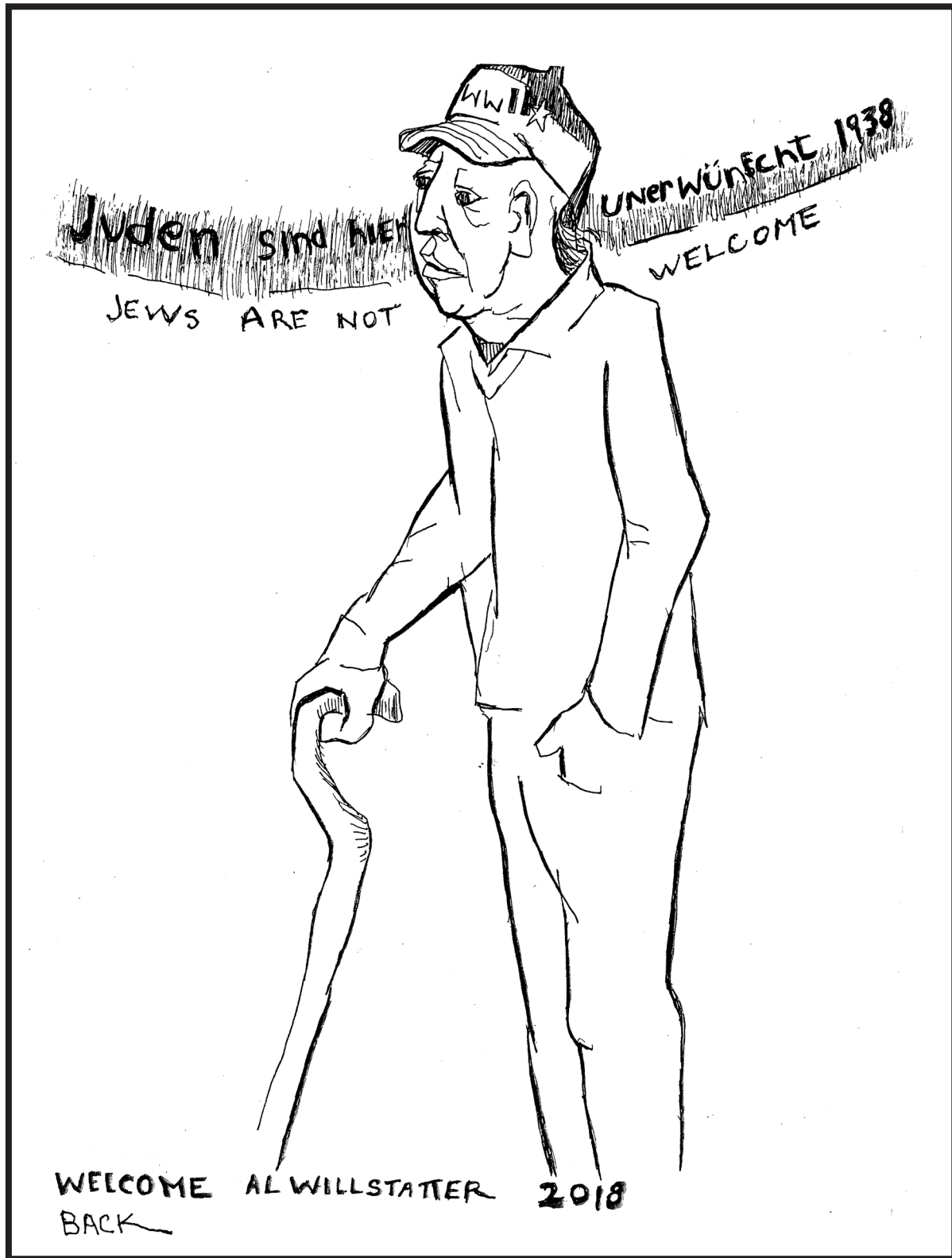


Al's Story: Final Chapter ?



Al Willstatter and Betty LaDuke

Al's Story: Final Chapter ?

In the fall of 2018, Al Willstatter and I (Betty LaDuke) were invited to a conference in Landsberg, Germany "**The Work of Remembering.**" The conference sponsors were Mayor Mathais Neuner and the Historical Society President, Sigrid Knollmuller.

The conference focus was "The Discrimination and Expulsion of the Jewish Families of Landsberg," which Al and his family had experienced and survived 80 years ago. All were happy that Al, at age 93, agreed to travel. He was especially anxious to once again see his boyhood friend, Max Doll, who he has kept in touch with for nine decades. Al considers Max a "brother by choice."

What does a town do with its history. . . the history of their father's and grandfather's generation? The Work of Remembering Conference (well attended) was an extraordinary community response. . . due to many years of dedicated research and commitment by Franz Rossle, Volker Gold, and Wolfgang Schonfeld. Al's conference presence was a reality-bridge between Landsberg's past and present.

The 2018 conference dates coincided with November 9, 1938, the **Kristallnacht** rampage, "when Jews could no longer be a Landsberg citizen" and banners were displayed "**Jews not welcome here.**" Al's presence (the human touch of history) at this event would offer a younger generation of Landsbergers a unique opportunity to interact with their parents' history, now their history. They would also learn why Al says "Once a Landsberger always a Landsberger."

Al firmly believes people and nations are "not all good or all bad." He remembers Muhl-gasse (Mill Street) neighbors helping his parents after they placed Al and brother Helmut on a boat to America without them (1938). For the next two years the neighbors protected Louis and Luzia Willstatter, helping them financially, sharing food, and transporting them to Italy where they found boat passage from Genoa to America to reunite with their children.



Willstatter Family
Before Al and Helmut
were put on the boat
to America 1938.

The Work of Remembering Exhibit Landsberg City Hall



Al Willstatter and Franz Rossle



Al Willstatter



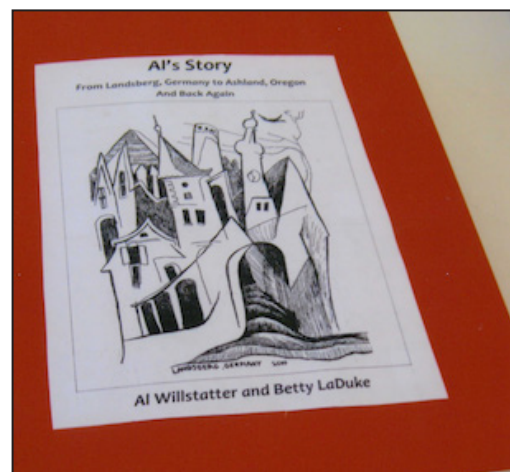
Betty LaDuke, Al, Franz, and Wolfgang



Al and Karl Willstatter



Franz, Al, Ronit Schlessinger, Volker Gold,
and Wolfgang Schonfeld

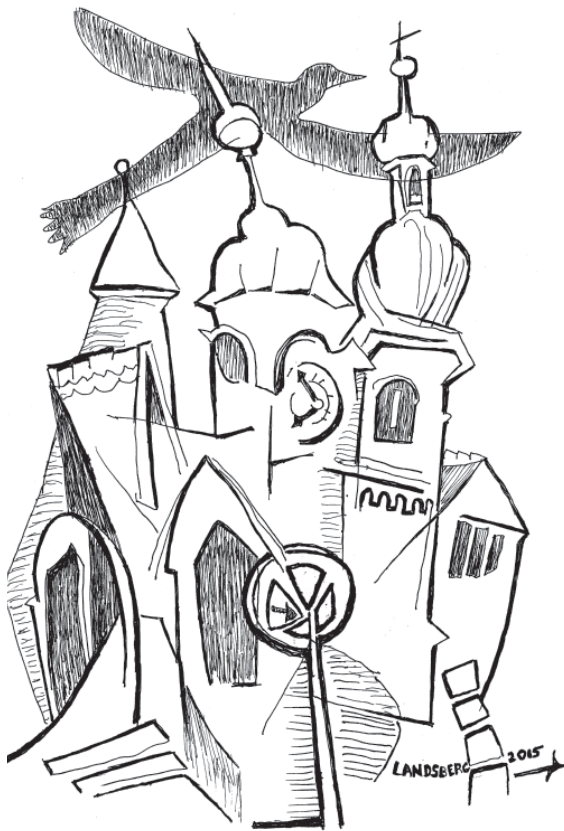


*Al's Story: From Ashland Oregon to
Landsberg, Germany and Back Again*

The Discrimination and Expulsion of Landsberg Jewish Families

Fate of the Jewish Family by Wolfgang Schonfeld 2018 (conference notes)

- The motivation of the Work of Remembering Conference is to acknowledge the pogrom of November 9th, 1938 the expulsion of the Jews from Landsberg, and to express the hope that such events may never again shape our social life.
- **1933** National Socialists seized power. The following events led to the systematic persecution and extermination of the Jews.
- **1935** Nurenberg Laws-- The legal basis for persecution and destruction of the Jews and "to protect German blood and German honor."
- **1938** Kristallnacht-- Destruction of 1,400 synagogues and meeting rooms, more than 1,400 victims. (marks the beginning of the pogroms).
- **1938** It can "No longer be expected of a German teacher to give instruction to Jewish school children. It is unbearable for a German student to sit in the same class room as Jews."
- **1938** Decree on the use of Jewish property. Jewish immigration identity cards were stamped with a red "J," and resulted in a Jewish tax and loss of citizenship. Jews shortly received the invitation to disappear from Landsberg.
- **1942** Berlin, Wannsee Conference "Final Solution to Jewish Question." The extermination of the Jewish family was promoted.

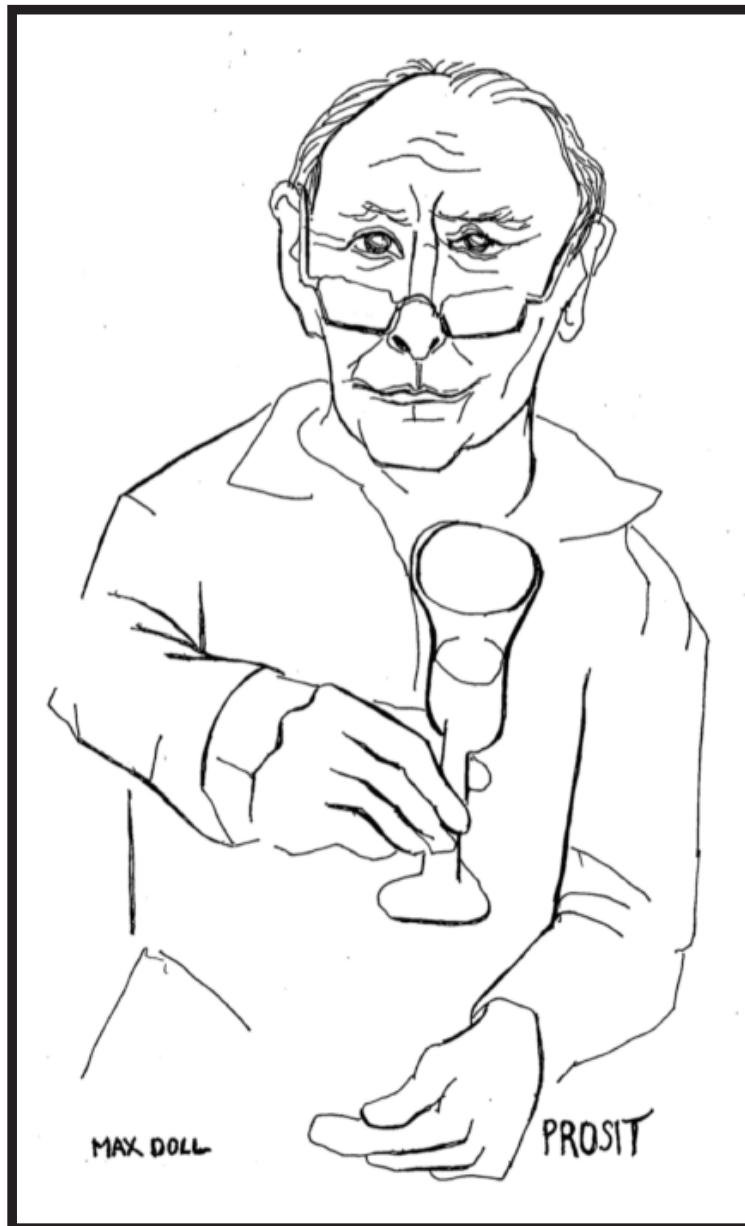


Remembering, Reliving, Resisting

Al's Story: Final Chapter ? is both personal and political. It is presented within the framework of remembering, reliving, and resisting.

How do people bridge time, history, and a devastating war that puts childhood friends on opposing sides, guns facing each other? How can they reunite without anger or rancor? After 53 years of separation, Max and Al, lucky to have survived the war, had an unexpected 1991 reunion in Landsberg. "Tongues loosened by beer," they were able to talk many hours about their experiences. Al says, "All was accepted with full understanding--the stupidity and hell of war."

Since then Max and Marianne and Al and Edie remained connected by more visits, letters, and phone calls. After the passing of our spouses, I joined Al (with my sketchbook) for Landsberg visits. Together we developed text and sketches for **Al's Story: From Landsberg, Germany to Ashland, Oregon and Back Again** (2014) and **Al's Story: Passing on the Torch** (2015). We were very pleased these publications were included in the "Work of Remembering" exhibit and later the Landsberg City Museum's permanent collection.



I. Remembering

War is Not The Answer: Human Relationships Are

Turbulent times prevailed on me to come out of my cocoon and reveal the impact that power-hungry egomaniacs can have on the populace no matter where. Third world countries such as Eritrea and Ethiopia have demonstrated a better way to resolve conflicts by negotiating a mutually beneficial solution. By contrast, the UN, the international talking head, should quit talking and address the international arms trade, the cause of much of our discomfort and human misery.

It was my boyhood friend, Max Doll, and the neighbors on Vordere Muhlgaasse, who risked their own lives to help and save the Willstatter Family that motivated me to accept the City of Landsberg's invitation. The task of initiating this particular commemoration was primarily the result of Franz Rossle, the former Oberburger Meister (mayor) of Landsberg, and Volker Gold and their boundless energy and determination.

The major thrust in committing to this invitation was Max Doll, who like me was called to kill on both sides of this ultranational political play. There are no winners. We both agree war is hell, and the abuse of power by power-drunk madmen who have no empathy for human decency.

Two Peas in a Pod: Max and Marianne

Both Max Doll and Marianne intuitively knew when they first met they were meant for each other. Both physically active, skiing, hiking, camping, and rock climbing consumed most of their leisure time. Marianne's artistic forte was creating dolls with their heads formed to replicate that of subjects posing for commissioned likenesses. She became well-known for her skill and extremely successful business. Both she and Max were supportive of each other, whether in the kitchen, the cabinet shop, or the mutually founded hobby shop.

The hobby shop contained about everything, from yarn to dolls and model airplanes.

Marianne attended many toy fairs and established a reputation as having the most complete hobby shop in the area. The American army's recreation department referred many hobbyists from their Augsburg garrison to the well stocked Landsberg Hobby Shop. As a necessity Marianne acquired enough English language skills to communicate effectively. Max, despite being in high demand at the cabinet shop found time to support their new found endeavor.



Brothers by Choice: Max and Al

Franz Rossle's observation to me that he had three fathers aroused my curiosity. When queried he replied "My father, my father in law, and Max Doll my Political Father." It struck an immediate note with me that I had two brothers, Herbert (Helmut) and Max Doll, who I was privileged to see at the hospital at Murnau just days before passing on—for that Betty, Karl, and I will be forever grateful.

Goodbye to a Landsberger Cornerstone

"The former businessman and city council member Max Doll passed away at age 93. Max Doll with a mixture of humor, consistent public contact, and lack of ego was a great gift. His ability to attain reasonable compromises was appreciated. His ability to listen and protect citizens rights to be heard was a priority. At age 70 he voluntarily left the council and refused to accept the The Golden Honor Ring-- He felt his service was a duty which he discharged with honor."- Landsberger Tagsblatt November 27th, 2018



A Normal German Neighborhood

Doll, Landersdorfer, Mauer, Jocher, Rahm, and Weishaupt

The Vordere Muhlgasse neighborhood fathers worked as a building contractor, a slaughter house manager, a cabinet shop owner, a grainmill operator, a soda pop bottling operation manager, an electrician, a city street sweeper, and a military garrison commander. This was a typical neighborhood.

Father: Louis Willstatter

...A real people person who was able to match people and their needs. He was an animal matchmaker connecting fertile cows with willing bulls. Dad never owned a car, his transportation was mainly by feet or bicycle, further distances were negotiated by taxi. Reimbursement for his services in lieu of cash, consisted of food such as chicken, eggs, beef, vegetables, etc. Cash may have been scarce but we were always well nourished.

Muhlgasse Neighborhood Boys

Max, Werner, Wolfgang, Sep (Joseph), Ernst, Oskar, Rudi, Jackel, and Jakob

Children Are Born Without Prejudices

We all played together. We were too young to appreciate the opposite sex, since the school system, unlike the US, consisted of separate boys and girl schools. Snowball fights in the winter were the norm. We improved the velocity and impact by inserting frozen horse droppings into snow with devastating results and superior performance. Handmade slingshots were also part of our "toy" assortment, with marbles sometimes coming into play.

Boys Games and Adult Hobbies

Simple toys like cast tin soldiers as well as cowboys and Indians served to replicate "battle scenes" either the wild west or military operations. Stamp collecting, both domestic (with swastikas and Hitler portraits were common) but the stamps from friends who had already departed to Palestine, Argentina, Chile, Cuba etc were a lesson in world geography and a means of staying connected.

"Be true to yourself. Follow the dictates of your conscience not the crowds."

"Dreaming that differences will be accepted-- rather than scorned."



Saturday Bakery -- Coffee House Experience

The bakeries, forerunners of today's "Starbucks," served as social centers for people to socialize and enjoy the German favorite card game "Skat." My brother and I were fortunate to accompany dad to these "social exposures." Herb and I alternated every week to avoid sibling rivalry.

One of Dad's friends was one of my teachers, Mr. Breu. He would sometimes disclose my indiscretions at school putting me into "double jeopardy." At any rate, the experience was always delightful, particularly when I was rewarded with a sumptuous pastry.

Matzo

All my boyhood friends were anxiously awaiting Passover each year, not for the religious experience, but for a delightful culinary adventure. My parents would order 20lbs of Matzos from Munich, which came by rail. Upon notification from the railroad station that the package had arrived, pickup and delivery service was provided by our boyhood friends. They loaded the Matza onto a little wagon.

After a week of getting the house ready for Passover by changing regular dishes to Kosher, and ridding the house of all leavened products-- the conversion from heavy filling German bread to Matzos took its course. The bland Matzos made a hit.

Mother found a way to make the pleasure more satisfying by brushing the matzos with sour cream and sprinkling them with cinnamon sugar prior to warming them in the oven. The results were greatly appreciated. **Youthful innocence is precious prior to being taught prejudice.**

Neighbors Sharing Christmas and Hanukah

At Christmas and Hanukah time we jointly celebrated with our neighbors the Landersdorfers. Even as a child I felt that candles captive in a *menorah* (candelabra) which we brought to the Landersdorfers were far safer than candles placed on a live Christmas tree. Their cookies and stollen were always eagerly consumed accompanied with "Gluhwein" (wine mulled with cinnamon sticks, cloves, lemon juice, and sugar) for the adults and hot cider for the youth. Mutual meals were enjoyed despite not always meeting the



Koscher dictates (pork roast). Mother would bring *Kugel* (pudding) and homemade *Challa* (Sabbath bread) prepared at home then taken to the local bakery for baking. Somehow flexibility, not rigidity, made and cemented great ongoing relationships.

DUNKLES BIER
WEISS WURST
SCHNITZLE
SPETZLE

AL WILLSTATTER 2018

II. Reliving

Speech by Volker Gold

"I greet you

and, of course, I am pleased that we can present the results of our contemporary history work to interested people as of today. But the theme of our meeting **"Discrimination and Expulsion of the Jewish Families of Landsberg"** is no cause for celebration. And yet the satisfaction is there:

We admitted shame and grief when we reviewed all available documents and relived the way the Jewish families felt when they were expelled from our city. That our collective memory includes the very, very unpleasant in our history is something of a cultural achievement-- and good for both sides as well. If we wanted to continue to forget and draw the line, this would hardly contribute to a common future. There are good reasons to assume that the right-wing populism, which has become stronger in some places, has its breeding ground in the dark silence, in the oblivion of history."

- We wish that the destinies of our displaced Jewish Landsbergers remain alive beyond this exhibition.
 - Had our forefathers and mothers in the Weimer Republic respected common values and preserved human respect despite economic hardships, perserved their Christian convictions and resisted authoritarian simplifier- nationalists for a purely "Aryan greater Germany," resistance could have happened in 1935.
 - Let us, as torchbearers preserve the flame of an enlightened humanity, and pass it on sooner in time, to illuminate the darkness of our human abyss!
 - We want to stand against the old and prevent the unfortunate politics of the past from repeating.
 - **"Most of them had no choice but to participate"**- Al Willstatter. . .
(A question for debate)
-

The Trouble with Hitler Analogies:

"A Majority of decent and well-meaning people said there was no need to confront Hitler... when people decided not to confront facism they were doing the popular thing, they were doing it for good reasons, and they were good people. . . but they. . ." Wall Street Journal Dec 1st, 2018

Education and anti-Semitism

...how quickly people forget **"The Holocaust is starting to fade among younger Europeans. . . "civilizations that fail to teach the lessons of their own brutal history to the young are, well, you know"** Wall Street Journal November 29th, 2018

1945: Al, A Witness to the Horrors that Unfolded

Pictured with released concentration camp inmates is Sgt. Jim Friel, one of the members of my Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon. I&R platoons were primarily used to seek out and neutralize enemy action, draw fire, and furnish combat intelligence to counteract any major action by the enemy, and to apply the available fire power of the infantry and artillery. Consequently we were always in front of the main units and first to witness the horrors that unfolded. We were virtually the bait.

Having witnessed these horrors, smelled the searing of human flesh, seen the skeletal emaciated inmates, these experiences made me resolve not to visit Holocaust Museums, not to have a flashback. Despite attempts to deny this genocide, there is ample documentation to establish this man made horror, and to hope that it never ever rears its ugly head again.

The concentration camps were factories that fed the German war machine.



Al, 1944 U.S. Army Base
Basic Infantry Training, Camp Roberts, CA



1945 (Al's Photo): Sgt. Jim Friel with Released Prisoners
Camp Mauthausen, Austria

2018: Betty LaDuke Visits Kaufering Concentration Camp

In 2018, from “fairy tale town of historic charm” I was exposed to another view of Landsberg. Franz Rossle arranged a tour for us hosted by the Landsberg Citizens Association. Nearby, on the outskirts of Landsberg we saw the partially preserved network of the Kaufering concentration camps, the hub of a slave labor armaments industry. Even the long empty, partially buried huts that housed the inmates (not all were Jewish), was a horrific experience.

Kaufering IV Slave Labor Camp

“In the outskirts of this town (Landsberg) existed the largest concentration camp in Germany during the Nazi rule. Over 30,000 victims were imprisoned under inhuman conditions resulting in the death of around 14,500 of them” -Wikipedia

“Six of the Kaufering Concentration Camps were liberated by the 7th Army’s 103rd Infantry Division, 411th Regiment on April 27th, 1945. The grounds were littered with the skeletons of Jews, Poles, Russians, French and un-Nazified Germans. In two of the camps the soldiers found Jewish men, women, and children shoved together, 100 to a hut. Military officers secured from the countryside 1,000 loaves of bread, 1,000 quarts of milk and 750 pounds of fresh meat per day to feed the emaciated living who weighed just 50 to 60 pounds from 5 to 6 years of forced labor, starvation and exposure. In one camp, 300 dead bodies lay on the ground while 600 “living zombies shuffled aimlessly.” 411th guards forced German civilians-- both men and women-- to pick up the bodies of the dead prisoners for burial.” -Wikipedia

Public Monument in Landsberg,
Kaufering Slave Labor Camp (detail)



Last Surviving Earth Huts,
Kaufering Camp IV, outskirts of Landsberg



III. Resisting

Alois Elsner's Courage:

Chimney Sweep from Landsberg Helps Concentration Camp Prisoner

Notes on article by Franz Xavier Rossle (1998)

In 1944 the chimney sweep district for Elsner's work (as dictated by the Nazi party) included the Kaufering slave labor camp located on the outskirts of Landsberg. Elsner "realized with open eyes the misery and cruelty reigning in these camps. He could not look away and established numerous contacts with prisoners of those camps, above all with doctors in the medical barracks."

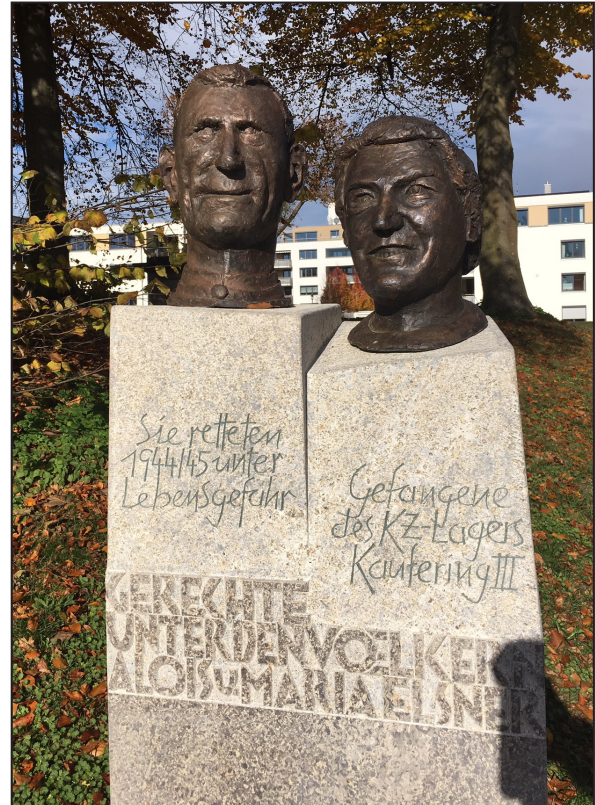
After the war Elsner received many notes of thanks from Kaufering and Dachau camp survivors for his "systematic smuggling of medicine, food, clothes, particularly stockings, underwear, etc."

Elsner and others were also participants in Landsberg's anti-fascist movement, a "**group of active savers.**" "Alois Elsner was the one with the most dangerous missions in this group." Mrs. Elsner constantly assisted him in his noble mission by procuring the medicine in various pharmacies. Her courage is tantamount to that of her husband's. "Due to a resolution of the Landsberg City Council" there is now "an Alois Elsner Road" where he rode his bicycle en route to the camps.

Al remembers, "Germans considered seeing a chimney sweeper a goodluck omen."



Kaufering VII Commemorative Memorial Plaque



Alois and Maria Elsner
Alois Elsner Road, Landsberg

Landsberg Citizens Association

The Citizen's Association was found November 9, 1983 in Landsberg. (38 years after WWII) People were forgetting. Eight citizens teamed up to "preserve the memory of the genocide of the Jews that had taken place on their doorstep." -Wikipedia

Preserving the Evidence

The Bavarian Prime Minister (at the time) Franz Joseph Straub supported the association's goal "to work against totalitarianism and racism." He promoted the preservation of the underground bunkers of the former Kaufering VII Concentration Camp to be included in a historic register. The association "bought part of the area of a former concentration camp to build the European Holocaust Memorial." To have "an everlasting remembrance of the Holocaust with dignity." "The European Holocaust Memorial is not only a place of remembrance. It is also an ongoing statement against racism and totalitarianism to deter similar crimes."

Goals

The Citizen's Association began to collect "documents, data, sources, and reports of contemporary witnesses on the following research topics:

- Anti-Jewish tradition in Landsberg in the 19th Century
- Hitler's incarceration in Landsberg 1923-1924
- Landsberg "city of the youth" - "city of Hitler"
- place of pilgrimage for Nazis from 1935-1945
- History of repression and reappraising: with which people are still trying to come to terms.

Active Programs Include:

- Tours of the European Holocaust Memorial
- Tours of the eleven concentration camps of Landsberg/Kaufering
- Organized tours for teachers and students

A Landsberg City magazine on contemporary history: "Themenhefte Landsberger Zeitgeschichte" is committed to conveying knowledge about history to their younger generation. . . and they should also reach further contemporary witnesses.

During The Work of Remembrance Conference the Landsberg City Museum did a two hour filming and recording session with AI. In addition, the three exhibit panels developed for each of the seven families expelled from Landsberg, will permanently be installed at the **Landsberg City Museum**.

The full meaning and impact of our 2018 Landsberg experience keeps evolving. There were new experiences and new information for us to absorb. AI had much to contribute!

In the United States there is also growing racism and intolerance . . . and each of us should be vigilant. . . **"Put out in the world what you would like to receive back."**

Choices

Hungary: Passes Landmark Holocaust Denial Law

“Those who publicly hurt the dignity of a victim of the Holocaust by denying or questioning the Holocaust itself, or claim it insignificant, infringe the law and can be punished by prison of up to three years.” Smithsonian July 21st, 2017

Poland's Denial:

“Polish President Andrzej Duda signed a law banning people from accusing Poland of Holocaust atrocities committed by the Nazis and from referring to concentration camps as “Polish Death Camps.” Washington Post February 6th, 2018

Wisdom: U.S. Pop-Culture:

- From a street protester's poster concerning gun violence, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about what matters.”
- Lin-Manuel Miranda (playwright, Hamilton) “How can we leave our country better than we found it. . . We get to choose what we put out in the world. I try to put out what I would like back.”

Who Decides. . . and the Morality that Guides

- **If** eight citizens can initiate the Landsberg Citizen's Association
- **If** a chimney sweep can help concentration camp inmates at the risk of his own life.
- **If** committed scholars: Franz Rossle, Volker Gold, Wolfgang Schonfeld can initiate **The Work of Remembering** conference with the support of Landsberg's mayor and Historical Society
- **If** Al (age 93) vividly recalls his boyhood memories of Muhglasse Street where children played together until prejudice was taught, and enforced, followed by expulsion and war.
- **If** Al Willstatter's and Max Doll's friendship could survive for nine decades. . . from opposite sides of the extremes of war and politics. . .
- to **agree war is hell. . . Prosit and L'Chaim.**





Holocaust Remembered 1968. . . Betty LaDuke 2018
Inspired by *Mila 18* written by Leon Uris 1961

People forget, but you can't forget what you have never learned.
TEACHERS MATTER.